

Lk. 17:1-2 “The Child’s Stumbling-Blocks”

For the Children: Have you ever tried to trap a bird or animal? Birds or animals that are caught in a trap can become very frightened and may hurt themselves. Sometimes it is necessary to set traps. But some people do things that trap others in sin. That is a bad thing. Even in the church, people sometimes hurt each other, set a bad example, and encourage others to sin. The only way out of the trap of sin is by believing in the Lord Jesus, repenting of sin, seeking God’s forgiveness, then trying to set things right with anyone you may have hurt.

Questions: What are some ways that people may lead others into sin? Why do you think the Lord especially warns against causing “little ones” to sin? How does the Lord show that He is in control of all things, including the sin that is in the world?

Introduction:

First Point: The Problem of Stumbling-Blocks

- 1) **The Nature of Stumbling-Blocks:** The term “stumbling-blocks” refers to a trap or snare. In this case, it is anything that causes a “little one” to fall into sin or ensnares them in it. It may not always be deliberate.
- 2) **Little Ones:** “Little ones” refers to children or perhaps those who are young in faith and therefore particularly vulnerable. See Mt. 18:1-6. Since Jesus spoke these words after setting a child before Him, it is hard to rule out the literal meaning.
- 3) **Causes of Stumbling:** The following list summarizes some ways that parents may become stumbling-blocks to their children: lack of spiritual teaching, example; divorce; absenteeism; lack of Biblical discipline (Prov. 13:34); unduly harsh or abusive behaviour; lack of showing love; hypocrisy – especially if parents are pretending to have faith. Children may also cause themselves to stumble, by overreacting to the failings of their parents, or by disregarding what their parents have taught them.

Second Point: Keeping Stumbling-Blocks in Perspective

- 1) **The Lord Is in Control:** We can be encouraged by the fact that the Lord is in control in all situations. He has ordained that there be stumbling-blocks in this fallen world and He brings good even from such things. That is why we are told that it is “inevitable” that they come – literally, impossible that there will not be such things.
- 2) **The Lord Cares for His People:** The Lord cares for both covenant-parents, with all their failings, and covenant children. That is why He warns against causing little ones to stumble: to help parents guard against sin and to show His care for the children. The warning is strong: better to have a millstone around your neck and be thrown into the sea, than to face the Lord after causing the downfall of a little one.
- 3) **The Grace of Repentance, Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** The sins of both believing parents and children are covered by the Lord Jesus. Because He blesses His people – including the little children – the Lord teaches those who have sinned to repent and those who have been hurt to forgive. Even though we cause others to stumble, there is forgiveness for us with God, in Christ; and there can be reconciliation between offender and offended. The strong warning here, like all of God’s Law, reminds us that we are sinners who need the grace of God in Christ. It is this that keeps us from despair.

Conclusion:

